

VANCOUVER THE VOYAGER.

THE Pacific Ocean having, as it appears, been very wantonly disturbed by an aggression altogether inconsistent with its name, we may aptly beguile half an hour with a retrospect of circumstances more immediately connected with the spot where this invasion has threatened the peace of kindred peoples. We will shut out politics as much as practicable, though it is impossible to be blind to the scandal of risking so much of human happiness for the sake of outrage in so bad a cause—a cause, too, which could not be advanced towards a just arrangement by the means employed.

Here we are startled by a glance back at the earlier times when these coasts became known to us; when the illustrious Drake explored the Pacific to that very degree of north latitude upon which this offence has been committed, and gave the name of New Albion to shores now ceded to the Stars and Stripes, but with which, it seems, the owners of that ensign are not yet contented. Two centuries elapse, and Spain has occupied the land and seaboard; our next noble figure is the gallant and ill-fated Cook, who was murdered by the savages at Owhyhee, on Valentine's day, thus saddening the merry quip, that it was all right the Sandwich Islands should be discovered by a Cook! But alas! the retrospect is dimmed when we discern so many of the bravest of the brave of British sailors fitting like ghosts athwart the gloom, and remember how they have perished in the service of their country, upholding the glory of her flag, maintaining the honour of her name, or spreading the blessings of science, civilization, and Christianity over the uttermost corners of the earth.

Of Captain Cook's three sons, all were dead within fourteen years after their father's loss; and two of them found their graves in the element his daring career so splendidly distinguished. George Vancouver was a midshipman on board his ship the "Resolution," and partook in all the labours and perils

of her encircling the globe. His own was the next turn, and at the close of the year 1790 he was prepared for a "voyage of discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and round the world." In January, 1791, he sailed from the Thames in command of the "Discovery," sloop of war, manned by a hundred officers and men, and armed with ten four-pounders and ten swivels, and the "Chatham," armed tender (Lieutenant Broughton), with a crew forty-five in all, and four three-pounders and six swivels. There were twenty-two marines in this force; for the half unravell'd tangle about Nootka Sound, and the uncertainty as to a pleasant understanding with the Spaniards, rendered some precautions necessary—not to speak of the dangers from treacherous Indians and cannibals abhorred.

Not to put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes, but diligently to survey and examine the least, if at all, known parts of the North Pacific, in four years, was the task undertaken by this distinguished navigator. And well was it performed. On his return to his native land, in 1795, such had been his care of his men that only one had died of disease, and four were lost by accidents, to which there was an endless and often almost desperate exposure, during four years and eight months and twenty-nine days. We love the seaman's particularity: it is the sure sign of truth. And all this, and much more, is recorded in the three now venerable quartos, published in 1798, edited by John Vancouver, in consequence of the recent death of his brother, who had corrected the press to page 288 of the third volume, and arranged the sequel, without being permitted by Providence to see the end of his exhaustive toils and exertions. An interesting folio of charts and views accompany the text; and the copy we have referred to is not made less attractive by having the autograph "Jos. Banks," another of the famed companions of Cook, inscribed on the fly-leaf.

As we have now ascertained that no navigable communication exists between the North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans, (whatever may soon be engineered by the short route of Panama,) Captain Vancouver was for a season chiefly engaged on his mission to Nootka Sound, and about Otaheite and the adjacent isles, making elaborate boat soundings, laying down charts, and, now and then, encountering the hostilities of the natives. Bows and arrows, and spears sixteen feet long pointed with iron, were not to be despised in the hands of these ferocious hordes, even by the wielders of fire-arms; and, if it came to close combat, every warrior had an iron dagger in a sheath, suspended from his neck, and looked as terrible as he could in his war clothes of strong hides, not unlike our modern cuirassiers, and painted up to the pitch of the appalling! And then the ladies among some of the tribes, with a slit below and parallel to the under lip, and capable of being ornamented with a wooden platter, fully three inches in circumference, and producing anything but a graceful appearance, were hardly less imposing. We remember a party of these Indians exhibited in Bond Street some thirty years ago. The male was stout and active: the female, an acknowledged belle and beauty, hideous, with two

mouths when she took the platter out, and more frightful when, with it in, she offered her lips for a salute after the English fashion. She was also vain of six or eight cicatrices upon her bronzed person, above the knees, which were testimonials of so many gashes made in honour of conquests she had achieved among the heroes of her tribe.

Having disposed of the matters referred to, Captain Vancouver addressed himself to the discovery and accurate survey of the coast between California and the Russian settlements, but principally between the forty-seventh and fifty-second or fifty-third degrees of north latitude, where lies the island which now bears his name, though originally conjoined to that of Quadra. About this island, between it and the main land, New Albion, and on the main land itself, his greatest pains were bestowed; and from Queen Charlotte's Sound at the northern extremity, to the Straits of Juan de Fuca at the south, he opened and determined a new region of geographical information, little dreaming of the Pactolus river, Fraser, which flowed into the middle of his course. At this time the aforesaid straits are spoken of and mapped as "the supposed;" for there is no reason to believe that ever De Fuca passed them and found an inland sea, any more than Mr. Robert Gray, of the Boston ship "Washington," rumoured to have accomplished the same exploit, but who, being met with and consulted by Vancouver in April, 1792, stated that he had entered the supposed straits, and found a passage five leagues wide, and had been told by the natives that the opening extended a considerable distance northward, which was all he knew of an inland sen.

On the last day of the same month, our gallant expedition made the latitude $48^{\circ} 19'$, penetrated these unknown straits, and proceeded to the exploration of the interior waters, islands, and continent, down Admiralty Inlet sixty or eighty miles southwards, and up the Gulf of Georgia and Queen Charlotte's Sound again into the broad Pacific, having thus circumnavigated Vancouver Island. Our countrymen, of course, took formal possession of all they saw; but as future treaties regulated these matters, we need not dwell on them here. As a portion of New Albion has become part of the United States, and Possession Sound is no longer an English possession, it is the simple fact that certain names have lapsed into desuetude. Even Whidbey's Island, between the disputed Juan and the continent, is coloured with the American green, and washed by Vancouver's Straits; while Puget's Sound, and other nominals from officers who traced them in the boats below latitude 48° , are all incorporated with the States.

As a diversion from these details, we may throw a glance at the natives, whom the keen competition in trading for furs brought into contact with Russians, Spaniards, Americans, and British visitors. One of the most inexplicable things that struck the voyagers, was the erection of poles, some of them a hundred feet high, and surmounted by horns, but the use of which could not be made out. Several of the tribes were very different from the Indians of Nootka Sound. All

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along the mainland the coast was desolate, and the name of Desolation Sound was appropriately given to a scene of extraordinary ruggedness and wintry rigour. Here a boating party ransacked one of the deserted villages, lately inhabited by some three hundred persons, from whose rags and filth they did not escape unscathed. On the contrary, they were so furiously infested by legions of fleas that they were glad to rush into the sea to escape from their tormentors; and this was hardly a sufficient refuge from the hungry vermin. It is curious enough, in the way of coincidence, that a very similar visitation occurred, only a few months ago, to our Sappers and Miners employed on the commission to mark the boundary line, (the forty-ninth parallel of latitude,) in conjunction with the American government. In this case, however, the assailants were not fleas, but mosquitoes; and our informant describes them as myriads upon myriads, darkening the wood through which our men had to pass, and literally covering them with stings on every part of their persons, and which penetrated through every impediment. So fierce and insufferable was the onslaught, that they were compelled to fly from the enemy, and, like the Vancouverists of old, seek safety by plunging up to their chins in the water. Even with this resource, their defence was incomplete, and they were obliged to boil their clothes before they could get rid of the annoying and dangerous insects. Unless improved culture mitigates this scourge, there will be an obstacle to overcome, during a few months of the best season, which was not contemplated when the expedition was sent out. But to return to our voyagers of last century.

While the island was populous and friendly to traffic, the opposite shore (as we have noticed) displayed throughout the utmost signs of ravage and misery. Skulls and skeletons were lying about in every direction. Some corpses were half burnt, some were thrust into holes, and some were suspended in canoes or baskets upon trees. War or desertion had depopulated the coast; and it was only at considerable distances that tribes were found to vary the monotony of wretchedness. At one place our sailors were enjoying a pic-nic entertainment, of which, fortunately for that feast, venison pasty formed a substantial dish. The Indians, as usual, watched the feed, and got a share occasionally, to encourage their good dispositions. But the venison was no treat for them: they could scarcely be induced to taste it; and when they did put a morsel between their lips, they instantly spat it out again, with every symptom of unutterable disgust and loathing. They fancied it was human flesh; and they were not cannibals, like the white men! Luckily, the head and haunch of a deer was at hand in the boat, and when they were shown, and the party convinced of the lawful nature of the meat, they set to work with a will, and relished the steaks like so many aldermen.

But other intercourse was neither so innocuous nor ended so well. The "Dædalus" arrived with stores, and with the news that Mr. Gpoch the astronomer had been barbarously murdered at Woahoo, which deed Captain Vancouver had to avenge by

convicting three of the assassins and delivering them over to their own chief for execution. The latter conveyed them from the ship, cruelly strapped down in canoes, and deliberately blew out their brains in succession with a pistol, the fellows seeming to care very little about the process.

It was on the 12th of August, (Gronse day,) 1793, that our countrymen were exposed to the most desperate attack from these cunning and blood-thirsty savages. A launch and a yawl were near the shore, though apart from each other, with four canoes full of natives, singing and apparently peaceably inclined; when another small canoe came up, and its two mariners approached without hesitation, in good humour, accepting presents, and all seeming inoffensive and friendly. But this was a ruse to put the crews off their guard, which was only unsuccessful in consequence of its being observed that the savages were armed, and therefore not to be trusted. They soon surrounded Lieutenant Puget in the yawl, and became exceedingly clamorous, at the same time hallooing on other large canoes from the beach to join them. This was succeeded by thieving, and the violent seizure of whatever they could lay their hands upon. The yawl was ordered to push from the shore, but the assailants hung on the quarters, caught hold of the oars, and screamed out, "Winnee Watter," (whatever that might mean).

At length, a large canoe arrived, under the command of a furious old woman with a huge lip ornament, who laid her vessel across the bow of the English boat, and, pulling up the lead line, like a regular old Salt, lashed the two together. This was the signal for action. A young chief in another canoe put on a mask resembling a wolf's face compounded with a human countenance, and prepared for battle; a third stole a musket; and the situation was imminently critical. A parley was attempted, but fifty daggers were drawn, and spears brandished to reject the overture. Yet a brief lull ensued, and the launch was working up to the rescue, the aged fury vociferously continuing to urge on the assailants. An old man also conspicuously exerted himself, and, with his comrades, began to plunder the boat. There was no farther time for temporizing; the launch had got within pistol shot, and the word was given to "Fire!" Instantaneous was the dispersion, as of wild ducks on a lake. Those in the small canoes leaped overboard and swam for their lives. Those in the larger craft, by a clever manœuvre, rushed all to one side, and so tilted up the other as a shield to protect them, and thus paddled off, crabwise, as fast as they could to the shore. Two of our men were badly wounded, and some fire-arms and cartridge boxes abstracted; and when the savages reached the shore, they climbed the rocks and threw large stones, thirty or forty yards, against the boats, but without effect.

These and all other adventures, privations, and dangers passed, one hundred and thirty-nine of our brave fellows (one missing) arrived safe at home in 1795, and the history of their toils was published in 1798, within a few months after the death of their intrepid commander. The narrative has

lately revived in interest, since it relates to the earliest discovery of those territories, touching which the new American world has set up such arrogant pretensions; and at last, by a sort of filibustering invasion, causelessly brought on an irritating issue to a question which justice and good sense would have left to be calmly settled by the simplest appeal to facts and honesty; and which had, indeed, been placed on that footing five years ago, by a reference to commissioners, who have not as yet completed their investigation, and made their report or award. The aggression of General Harney is therefore as uncalled-for as it is outrageous, and the United States government have found it necessary to repudiate it. In the year 1846, the exploring American General, Fremont, constructed a map, in which the Island of San Juan (only about six miles from Vancouver's Island, with a deep channel between, and nearly thirty from the American continent) was allowed to be British. It has since been held by the Hudson's Bay Company from the Crown; but the gold discoveries on the Fraser River seem to have awakened an ambi-

tious and covetous desire for annexation, which it may be difficult to appease without war. Vancouver Island is not mentioned in McCulloch's great geographical dictionary (ed. 1842); and here is the little satellite among the archipelago on its south-east corner, about which Vancouver boated and paddled sixty-seven years ago, raised into an importance that may set the world in flames. And why? It is the present key to the navigation up De Fuca Strait to the mouth of the Fraser river, and the future key to farther encroachments which threaten all British Columbia. Yet, in fair dealing and honour, nothing could be more readily and satisfactorily adjusted, by the commonest application of science, than the line which it is agreed shall settle the joint occupancy, and divide the claims of the two countries. The line, on leaving the continental land, "shall be continued westward, along the 49th parallel of north latitude, to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island, and thence southerly, through the middle of the said channel and of Fuca's Strait to the Pacific Ocean." So runs the clause of the Ashburton treaty.



WESTERN COAST OF NORTH AMERICA, FROM THE RUSSIAN BOUNDARY TO SAN FRANCISCO.



SAN JUAN ISLAND, WITH THE BOUNDARY LINES AS CLAIMED BY THE BRITISH AND AMERICANS RESPECTIVELY.

While writing this paper, the gratifying intelligence reaches Europe that General Scott has arrived on the scene of dispute, as diplomatic negotiator on the part of the United States. He has been instructed to disavow the seizure of the Island of San Juan, as a formal appropriation, and to declare that it shall remain neutral territory until the claims of the two nations have been discussed and decided. The presence of a man like General Scott will tend to soothe the irritation, and to give new hope of the matter being settled in a spirit of friendly adjustment and mutual respect.